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# IN AUGURAL SERMON,

PREACHED IN

Christ Church Cathedral, Montreal,

BY

MAURICE S. BALDWIN, M.A.,

Rector of Montreal and Canon of the Cathedral.

*October 20th, 1872.*

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PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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Montreal:

PRINTED BY JOHN LOVELL, ST. NICHOLAS STREET,  
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*Stanley & Bagg Esq.*



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# INAUGURAL SERMON.

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“Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.”—*Acts xx, 24.*

ON this occasion of my addressing you, the first which has presented itself since my Induction, I feel it to be a most pleasing, as well as imperative, duty publicly to thank you all, the members of Christ Church Cathedral, for the high honor you have conferred upon me by the unanimous and hearty vote of your assembled Vestry. The affairs of religion, connected as they are with the deepest and truest feelings of the human heart, usually evoke our most profound emotions, and make us keenly jealous in any change, lest our liberties should be curtailed or our principles denied. I deem it therefore matter of the most devout thankfulness, that you have reposed such implicit confidence in me as to give me that position which, by your deliberative choice, I now enjoy. I thank you for your unanimity. It will strengthen my hands, it will cheer my heart, it will confirm my faith in the future. It will make me hereafter, as I do now in the present, recognize the guidings of that strong,

but invisible Hand, which leads us all by paths whose strange futurity we know not. In all our histories we have seen how difficulties have been removed, scenes changed, and results accomplished of which at one time we never dreamed, and thus have we learned that the restless events of our everyday life are not as the wreathings of the vapory clouds, the result of capricious winds, but the necessary incidents of that road which leads by many windings up to the full accomplishment of the purposes of God.

To Him, therefore, who has ordered all things from the beginning, I ascribe all the praise ; on Him alone rely for strength and guidance in the future.

Our united history may be very brief ; it may, through the providence of God, be protracted for some years to come ; but whether it be brief or whether it be long, I trust it will ever be characterized by energy, faithfulness and zeal ; by a kind and mutual forbearance ; by oneness in feeling, and by unity in design ; above all, by the debasement of everything unreal, degrading or vicious within us, and by the supreme exaltation of Him who alone can bless, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It shall not be mine this morning to dwell on matters wholly personal. What I am, you see ; what I shall be, the future will best declare. That which I do desire is, to explain some of the grand and eleva-

ting principles which hereafter shall be not only the subject of all my teaching, but the directors of my policy and life.

"*Neither count I my life dear unto me.*" These words of unexampled energy embody the one sovereign sentiment which should actuate every minister of the Gospel of Christ. Their sum and substance is : *unselfish devotion to God*. Unselfishness, in fact, here reaches the meridian point of moral beauty and sublimity.

Pure and noble unselfishness is not uncommon : on the contrary, in these days of Christian development and activity, it is frequent. Still, however, this unselfishness of which I speak is generally limited ; partial, not total ; contracted, not boundless. A father, for instance, may be wholly unselfish himself, but at the same time extremely *selfish* in the interests of his family. A teacher may be wholly unselfish as regards his own disciples, but bitterly the opposite towards those of any other school of thought. A patriot statesman may be found quite willing to die for the sake of his country, but at the same time he may show the ferocity of a tiger in seizing the dominions of a weaker or less favored neighbor. Human unselfishness, is like the oases of the desert, those lovely and fertile islands, surrounded by shifting and eternal sands, which cheer the heart of the traveller. The oases may sometimes be small, sometimes vast, but

sand, nothing but sand, ever surrounds them. So human unselfishness is ever sharply defined by the dreary desert of selfishness. Here, in the case of the great Apostle, we see unselfishness soaring above all human weakness, and unsullied by the passions of mankind, his fixed and solemn resolve being : in the name and by the power of his divine Master, and at any cost, *to testify the Gospel of the grace of God*. It was true he desired to finish his course with joy ; but this object, however grand, constituted not the ultimate end of his life ; it was rather, to Jew and Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God. In proof of this high resolve, he declares his willingness to make the greatest sacrifice possible for man, namely, to lay down his life. “Neither count I my life dear to me, that I might finish my course with joy.”

That to which an intelligent man is giving every power of his mind and body ; that for which he calmly declares his willingness to die, must be something which claims at least the thoughtful attention of mankind. St. Paul tells us *that* object was, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God. Is then the Gospel, it may be asked, of such paramount importance as to justify so great a devotion ? Is it really of such transcendent value to the world at large as to make it reasonable that a man should lay down his life for it ?



Yes, most assuredly, we answer ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. The Gospel, then, for which St. Paul devoted every energy of his mind and body—the Gospel for which he was so willing to die,—is that which, through the grace of God, I am determined to proclaim. I cannot explain all the deep secrets of the Gospel of Christ ; clouds of mystery hang round about it like the lingering mists which often shroud the majesty of a mountain. Clear and evident in everything which is of vital importance for the salvation of man, it yet has depths which we cannot fathom, and heights which we cannot scale. Like the Nile, it overflows its banks with life-giving waters, while it hides its sources far away in the impenetrable secrets of the love of God. Foremost and most conspicuous among those articles of the Gospel which we can all understand is this : *Christ, the centre of the Christian faith.* The glaring and palpable deficiency in all the systems of philosophy and mythology in the past, was their utter want of a warm and life-giving centre. Mythology, regarded as a fable, was beautiful, but it was cold. Philosophy was brilliant, but ephemeral. Teachers in the past, as well as in the present, have tried to affix men to systems all as dead and cold as the sepulchre itself, and therefore their experiment has failed. The great want has been a *human* centre, a being around whom

disciples might rally ; for whom devoted friends might die, and before whom enemies might be discomfited. Armies, united under one powerful leader, have swept resistless over continents. Here the one informing, energizing centre is the living man. His pulse throbs through the whole mass, and makes it mighty. Philosophy has heaped up law on law, speculation on speculation, gathered the dry leaves and bloodless bones of human thought, and endeavored with these poor withered materials to build up a stable system, capable of meeting the wants and soothing the griefs of a lost and troubled world ; and it has failed—failed too, for this reason, that it has never supplied man with that which is indispensably necessary for his spiritual and moral welfare,—a warm and living centre ; a Being to whom in trouble he may go, in weakness confide, and in death trust. Much also of the so-called Christianity of the day is utterly dead and powerless, because its professors are attached to the system rather than to its centre—to Christianity rather than to Christ. The Gospel which Paul desired to testify is not like the systems and philosophies of men ; it bids its members lean, not on the icy laws of speculative thought, but on the warm, loving, pulsating heart of the Great Saviour of mankind. Christianity has a centre, and that centre is not ice—but warmth, and power, and life. Its people walk not in the moonlight

of supposition, but in the sunlight of revealed truth. As one has well said, "we have not only a *deliverance* but a *deliverer*, not only a redemption but a Redeemer." This therefore shall be my constant work, to exhibit Christ as the living centre of the moral world ; to show the absolute necessity of our unity with Him, as the source of our life and the Director of our path ; to impress upon you the important fact that it is not enough to be identified in name and form with the Christian Church, to wear the habiliments and conform to the outward laws of the Gospel profession, but to be ourselves the living branches of the true Vine, the Lord Jesus Christ. I shall teach this in opposition to all the formalism and insincerity of the day, endeavoring ever to impress you that it is not sufficient to shoot athwart the orbits of Christian people so as to appear one with them ; but rather to be as *they* are, united to the great central Sun, and moving forever in perfect accordance with His laws.

In the next place, *I shall endeavor to point out Christ as the All-sufficient Saviour*—all-sufficient as regards the Law. On him who has fled to Christ, the law in its condemning power is utterly powerless. Though it search him with the closest scrutiny, yet will it not find in him either matter of accusation or ground of condemnation. The atoning Blood has blanched his crimson sins, and freed his fettered

heart. Here for him in the Person of his divine Redeemer the law in all its righteousness has been strictly fulfilled. Here too, before this same great Propitiator, the loud thunders of omnipotent wrath (which shake the world of sin) die out in silence, and here the Angel of Vengeance, delighted with the sight, sheathes with a smile, his sword. No condemnation is there to this man, no longer in bondage to the law of sin and death ; he is free under a better law, the law of the spirit of life. And when the Great Day comes, when heaven and earth shall flee away at the sight of Him who sitteth upon the throne,—then, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, shall Christ outstretch His arms and shield this man, and all the blood-washed throng, from the accusings of the law, from Satan and from death.

I shall teach Christ also as sufficient for that most trying of all days, the day of prosperity and peace. This is the day when the heart is tempted to stray, and the mind to relax its vigil ; when the future burns with a thousand hopes, and all the way seems void of danger or of accident—then we need most His watchful care ; and then is He all-sufficient. I shall speak of His sufficiency in the *day of trouble*, when the heart breaks and when the tears flow ; when hope seems fled, and dark, dumb night has gathered in around us ; how then He holds the hand and says : “ Fear not.”

Sufficient is He for the *day of business*, with its thousand cares, anxieties and strifes, able to evolve order from its chaos, and peace from its scenes of restlessness. Sufficient for the *day of sickness*, with its fevered pulse, and rolling brain ; when friends weep and eternity seems near. Sufficient, most of all, for the *day of death*, when the world fades, and all alone we enter the silent valley. Then shall He who has conquered death, and brought life and immortality to light, change timidity to confidence, and the darkness of the grave to the splendor of the better world.

I shall preach *Christ as being free and accessible to all*. No edicts, stern and irrevocable, barring progress to His throne ; no muttering priesthood, forbidding the sinner's personal approach. *Free* to prince and beggar, old and young, master and servant, learned and ignorant, sinner and saint. *Free to all*. Free as the brooklet that hastens through the dell ; free as the atmosphere which all may breathe ; freest of all as the sunlight of heaven that, age after age, rolls down in glorious plenty on this thankless, heartless world. Solé Sovereign, High Priest of heaven and of earth, He stands beckoning to Himself *all* for whom His blood was shed, and in *that all* we live.

In the third place, *I shall endeavor to show the preciousness of every soul in the sight of God*. False humility may debase, as pride may exalt, too much the true position

of man. I shall, therefore, strive to give you a correct idea of the dignity of our life, and nobility of our manhood before God ; to show the high and holy ends for which we were all created, the race we have all to run, and the victory we all may win ; how none can be idle in this great workhouse of the living God ; how all, even the most wretched and grovelling, are *precious* in the sight of Christ, for he *must* be precious for whom Christ died ; and above all, how each one, through the power of the Great Redeemer, may be changed from glory to glory, till he is made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

I shall teach also how the Christian is to play his part in the great struggle of life, without compromise of principle, or loss of his blood-bought freedom ; how he, as being the salt of the earth, is to inaugurate and sustain every real effort for the moral and social reform of his fellow-creatures, laboring as a man of God only can labor with self-sacrificing zeal, and resting not until, in the face of all the storms and bitter antagonisms of this scoffing world, he has fought the dread battle to the gate. This, therefore, shall be my work, to go with you into the field, the workshop and the marts of commerce, the busy home and the crowded street, and show you how in every station you may not only glorify God, but serve the interests of your fellow-men.

In fine, it shall be my constant effort to exhibit our Church as the *reformed* and *protestant* Church of England. As a faithful and true *witness* to her Lord and Master Jesus Christ in an age of change and uncertainty. *Faithful* amid the errors, superstitions and apostasies of the day ; amid the aggressions of Rome on the one hand, and Infidelity on the other. *Faithful* amid all those strong and insidious tendencies which would either lure him again into the servile bondage of the past, or cloud her brightness in eternal gloom. *Faithful* above all, in pointing weary men and leading weary feet to Christ and Christ alone.

*True*, not mingling chaff with the wheaten bread, nor the doctrines of men with the oracles of God, she speaks the language of *Truth*, and the words of life are on her lips.

*As concerning the Sacraments* ; in accordance with the doctrine of the Church of England, I shall teach that they were intended by our Lord to be the outward signs of an inward reality ; not of themselves, and by mere reason of their use, effectual, but dependent for their efficacy on the faith or grace of the recipient. Furthermore, that no one has a right to conclude concerning himself that he is a child of God, merely from the fact of his having partaken of either of the Sacraments, when, at the same time, none of the evidences of a renewed heart are forthcoming in

his life. Such a person needs yet to be born from above, although by Baptism he has been admitted into the outward visible Church.

As regards the Sacrament of our *Lord's Supper*, I shall teach that it was instituted by our blessed Lord, not as a means whereby sinners might be converted to God, but for the strengthening and refreshing of those who have *already* been regenerated by the operation of the Holy Spirit. And this I shall urge the more earnestly upon you, from the many painful and distressing scenes I have witnessed, where clergymen have been hastily sent for to administer the Lord's Supper to those who, up to that very moment, had been the avowed enemies of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Having now brought before you some of the doctrinal principles I hope to enunciate from this pulpit, permit me to mention some other subjects most worthy of your highest consideration. The *first* I shall mention is : the *Principle of Radiation*.

It is a matter of continued observation, that comfort and outward prosperity often make a community thoroughly oblivious to the wants of others. A Church, for instance, looks at its ledger, and finds that *financially* it is prosperous ; at its pews, and finds that *numerically* it is strong ; at its members, and finds that *socially* it is fashionable and elevated ;



and thus surveying everything it sees only one great circle of contentment. Every one is delighted at the present position and future prospect, and perhaps the most distant idea of any failure of duty never enters their minds. The real question which such a church should put to itself is this : What are we doing for the benefit of the outside world ? If it answered honestly it would say "nothing, absolutely nothing." The truth is, it is one vast absorbent ; it radiates neither heat nor light. All the sermons, expositions, advantages and blessings which it enjoys are consumed by its members. They devour them all, even to the very crumbs. There never seems to be any excess over and above their wants by which they might benefit others. They are full, but not to overflowing. They forget that it is the excess of sunlight in the sun that illuminates the world. That orb has not only enough for itself, but its superabundance is the daylight of the universe. Such churches do not fulfil the high and holy ends for which they were created. Absorbents and not radiators, they heed not the saying of our blessed Lord : "Let your light shine." The vine-dresser has labored for them, but they have produced no fruit, and therefore, before long, will He cut them down as cumberers of the ground.

And now to bring the question home to ourselves,

let us ask, what are *we* doing for the benefit of the outside world? Certainly not what we might. We are peaceful, happy and prosperous, and without controversy, do more for home missions than any Church in the Diocese. Yet surely we might do more for the vast community in which we live, more for those who are sunk in iniquity and shame, and who, even in their misery, appeal to the Christian Church for the kind hand of sympathy and love. We should be a *power* in the city; a sunlight to it, lighting up its dark recesses with the light of truth; and more than this, we should bend our every energy to elevate our fellow-man; to set him free from the bondage of his sins in the liberty of the Gospel of Christ. I think, too, we should direct our attention to *foreign work*, inaugurating in this respect a new era. No reason, that I am aware of, exists, why this Cathedral Church should not be a *power* on the hallowed plains of Palestine, thereby making glad the heart of the desolate daughters of Zion, as well as here in this great city. No reason why we should not be a *power* on the banks of the Niger, or in the distant cities of India, China or Japan. No other reason at least than the apathy which is culpable, or the distrust which is dishonoring to God. Were we more alive in this particular, I am sure we would be more successful; "we would grow as the lily, and

cast forth our roots as Lebanon ; our branches should spread, and our beauty be as the olive tree." Work done for God all comes back to bless the laborer. And in our case, as the waters which the rivers disembogue all return in copious showers to their springs, so would our efforts hasten back to refresh us, and make us stronger for the future.

This, therefore, shall be my work, to point out to you all the high and important part you yet may play in the moral history of the world. To exhibit the responsibility each one is under to fulfil the stewardship of God, and increase the talents entrusted to his care. Above all, to impress upon you this important truth, that in comparison with this momentous work, even life itself—life with all its clinging memories and darling hopes—is not to be considered dear unto us, that we may finish our course with joy.

*To conclude :* If the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who shone out in the Christian Church like Sirius in the heavens, could find it necessary to ask the prayers and suffrages of his people, how much more should I earnestly crave yours ? Your prayers, warm, earnest, and incessant, I ask. You who know how impossible it is for one mind to suit all the peculiarities and idiosyncracies of a large congregation, will see at once how much mutual kindness and sympathy is needed peacefully to discharge our work. I shall ask you,

therefore, in the future, to believe that the right thing is always at least *intended* if the right thing is not always done ; and thus mutually excusing each other we shall the better discharge the will of our Great Redeemer. "Pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watch thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints ; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel."

